ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

Miles Burd and Daryl Strong

April 19, 2000 (according to written tape label)
April 20, 2000 (according to voice recording)
Chandler, Arizona

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for:
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Oral History Interview of Miles Burd and Daryl Strong

Besom: It's April 20, 2000, we're in Chandler, Arizona, with Air Force pilots Miles Burd and Daryl Strong, who though from Luke Air Force Base, had several encounters with the canyon on search and rescues, et cetera. This is Kim Besom. We're also here with Tom Martin from Grand Canyon and Luann Burd, is that correct? All right, tell us, one of your first trips to Grand Canyon. . . .

Miles Burd: The first trip I took though Grand Canyon was I and another pilot, Captain Womack [phonetic spelling], went up there and took an archdeacon [phonetic spelling] that was quite old, and he had served down in the canyon with the Indians, and he was too old to travel there any way but by helicopter, so we took him in by helicopter. That was the first time we'd been in the canyon.

Besom: And where was that to?

Miles Burd: Supai.

Besom: Just so he could start. . . .

Miles Burd: Just so he could see the people. He just wanted to go back. Just something he wanted to do. So we just took him in. I don't remember if we stayed two, three hours, or something like that. But anyway, that's what I had down there.

Besom: On the video tape?

Miles Burd: On the video tape, yeah.

Besom: Okay, so he stayed for a couple of hours and then you flew him back?

Miles Burd: Right, brought him back up, back to Luke.

Besom: What were you flying then?

Miles Burd: H-19 helicopter.

Besom: Was that pretty unusual for the Supais to see?

Miles Burd: Yes, I think it was the first time they'd seen one.

Besom: Did he draw quite a crowd?

Miles Burd: Yeah, by looking at that video, you could see when I opened the cowling or the engine doors, they just all come crowding around to look in. They stand back about fifty feet away and look in amazement (chuckles) you know.

Besom: What year was that?

Miles Burd: I suppose it was early 1956. Yeah, it was before the crash.

Louann Burd: It was after Ron was born, and he was born the first of June, because you took pictures of Ron in the crib before you went to Supai.

Miles Burd: It's in here if I look it up.

Louann Burd: What's that thing?

Miles Burd: No, no, it's not there.

Besom: If that was your first visit to the canyon, what was it like flying over the canyon?

Miles Burd: Well, the first time over the edge, that was an experience, because we always had kind of a habit of flying close to the ground, unless we didn't have to. And you come over the edge and. . . . Flying a helicopter is different than a fixed-wing plane, and as soon as you come over that edge, you're flying on instruments because of the rotor speed and everything in a helicopter--you fly on instruments until, well, I guess you'd say after a while you get the feel of it and then you can start. . . . You're still looking at instruments all the time, because you can overspeed your rotor and things.

Strong: You know, you're flying fifty feet in the air, and all of a sudden you're five THOUSAND feet in the air, it's startling.

Besom: Then did you fly up and down the canyon as well?

Miles Burd: Yeah, some on that trip, yes.

Besom: Were you a young guy? Was this kind of like a thrill flight?

Miles Burd: Everything we done in those days was a thrill! (laughter) At that time, Daryl and I were the only two helicopter pilots out here at Luke. And we'd got these new helicopters and they were great.

Strong: They were the first GOOD helicopter that the military had--the first good one.

Besom: And your role as pilots was generally to do what?

Miles Burd: During gunnery training we picked up anybody that had trouble at Luke. Well, we covered the whole state of Arizona, because we covered car accidents, floods--everything that happened.

Strong: How many times were you in the Superstitions, picking up people? I bet we were both in there _____ looking for people in the Superstitions.

Miles Burd: Yeah. Search and rescue, I guess is what you'd call it.

Besom: And not exclusively Air Force?

Miles Burd: Anything. We got the first call. I was here a while before you were.

Strong: When I came to Luke, _____ because Miles had been there for a month or two. Then he went back to Nellis where he was assigned. When I went there, I was in panic, because I was the only one there. Pretty soon Miles _____ after a couple of weeks or something. But he had been down there temporary duty before I did.

Miles Burd: I remember flying the first so-called weather observation helicopters, because we got a flash flood--you know how they get them in the mountains--and I'd take off like three, four o'clock in the afternoon, after a thundershower and go out and report that. . . . You know, from the base the couldn't go in on Glendale Avenue, they probably had to go over east farther and come in THAT way. One time I picked off a guy--and I don't remember where he was from, but there was a flash flood and he'd driven out on Glendale there to the Agua Fria and was sitting there. A news reporter with a camera sitting there on the back of his convertible, watching this five-foot wall of water comes toward him. And I picked him off the back end of the convertible about two blocks down. I don't know how long he'd sat there, but anyway. . . .

Besom: How did you pick him up?

Miles Burd: Just with the helicopter. I went in with the helicopter.

Strong: So did you have a cable crew at that time?

Miles Burd: We had a cable, but no, I just got low enough and pulled him in. These helicopters were pilot, copilot and ten passenger.

Strong: _____ In the summertime _____ flight surgeon and _____.

Miles Burd: Wow. So you had seven gas tanks there, of various sizes. We kind of loaded gas according to. . . . If we knew we were going a long way, we'd take a lot of gas. If we knew we were going where we knew you had to work a [pard?] or something, and weather was a factor--you know, the heat--then we'd go with less fuel. I remember _____ one come, we come back, and we, oh, I don't know, north of Phoenix, Scottsdale, we were running low on fuel, we stopped at a gas station out there _____ just pulled into a gas station and gassed up like you would a car. (laughter) You had an Air Force credit card in your pocket. It wasn't the same octane, it was lower octane, but we'd put it in the tank, and once we got airborne, then we'd use that. So we had the high octane for maximum power for takeoff.

Besom: How far could seven tanks take you?

(both talking at same time, neither discernable--one of the joys of gang interviews)

Miles Burd: _____ Supai and back.

Strong: Yeah, _____, from Luke. When we first went up there, man, it was dark when we took off. When you look back at it, with the experience we had, it's wonder _____. I've got a good story to tell you. Maybe you wouldn't want to put it to publish. (laughter)

Besom: Oh, I'm. . . . (laughs)

Miles Burd: (laughs) We'll let someone else do that.

Besom: Yes, somebody else does the publishing.

Strong: One day [our boss called in?] and he said, "We've got kind of a mission and a job for you to do." "Okay." So he handed me a manila envelope like this. And he said, "Now, you fly a heading of 40 degrees or whatever, and you go up there about a half an hour, and you take these people." I think there were six men. "And you fly this heading for maybe half an hour, and then you can open up this envelope, and it'll tell you where to go." That kind of spooks you. "But you're not supposed to let anybody, any passenger, any of these men downstairs, you cannot let them see this. This is just for you. They can't see this." That sounds kind of spooky, doesn't it? So I get up there a certain distance and open it up, and there's a chart on there of the Grand Canyon. And I'm supposed to identify this place and go there!

Miles Burd: Oh, my God!

Strong: And, you know, that wasn't too difficult, because you could find the spots by the charts and how the river runs. I was told, "Now, when you get there, you're just supposed to tell these men that this is the place you came to see, but you're not supposed to tell them where it is." And it ended up that they were congressmen, and it was a time when they were planning to build the Glen Canyon Dam, and they didn't want any congressman to know which land would be available to build a dam, because they might go in there and make some arrangements to buy some of it or do something. So they could not know exactly where it was. "Just tell them this is the spot you came up to see." I didn't know this. I didn't know this till later, because I was kind of curious. How come I had to take them up there and they couldn't see what they were looking at? Didn't want them to know just where this was going to be.

Besom: Did you know they were congressmen at the time?

Strong: No.

Miles Burd: See, now, when I went up, I took [Senator Carl] Hayden up.

Besom: This is a separate trip?

Miles Burd: Yeah. And he came down, and I didn't know Hayden from--I mean, I knew who he was--but I didn't know how old and frail he was. When we saw

that, we called the flight surgeon, we got a doctor. (laughter) We had a C-47, I think, or _____ stand by, and we went up to Marble Canyon.

Strong: Must have been a C-47, _____.

Miles Burd: And then went from THERE on up. I mean, I just wouldn't have taken a chance of taking him without having a flight surgeon [handy?]. As it turned out, it was okay, but. . . .

Besom: What year were these [flights]?

Miles Burd: Well, this would have been about the same time.

Strong: Someplace between 1955 and 1956.

Besom: Okay. And with Hayden you flew the river, looking at dam sites, or just to the one site where Glen Canyon would be?

Miles Burd: Basically where the dam would be, yeah. I think I've got a letter from Hayden _____.

(several talking at same time, none discernable)

Besom: Oh, okay.

Miles Burd: See I don't know if I got that _____.

Besom: Okay.

Strong: _____.

Besom: Now, to fly to the canyon, did you have to report to the Grand Canyon in any way?

Miles Burd: No.

Besom: You just get your orders and take off?

Strong: We didn't report to anybody. (laughter)

Miles Burd: It was a lot different in those days than it is now.

Besom: Okay.

Miles Burd: There were two bosses out there, Daryl and [us?], as far as helicopters. There wasn't anybody else at the base could fly them.

Besom: When you flew these senators up, did you land and they get out and look? _____.

Strong: Unt-uh, no way.

Miles Burd: No, I don't think we did _____. No, we just looked--looked over from the air.

Besom: And you were supposed to see. . . .

(both talking at same time, neither discernable)

Besom: So from this letter it looks like 1956? So you did all sorts of special missions as well as search and rescue?

Strong: We looked for mafia people, chasing _____. The government, the FBI, whoever it was, marked the top of their car with something, and take us out and they could look at it through certain lenses or something, and follow the car to where they were going. We were pretty much kept out _____. Weren't aware, you know. _____ all public relations, pretty much.

Besom: Well, the archdeacon, taking him, that sounds like that would be almost a favor to somebody.

Strong: It was. Well, you know, back in those days when they're going to have a frost warning--I never did this--but some of the orchards out by the base, Miles went out at night, flew back and forth over them to keep them from freezing. You did that.

Miles Burd: Yeah. But we had free reign.

Strong: The foreman at the _____ by Luke, which was a pretty big citrus and--they had their own railroad spur and everything, and this guy used to come out to the base, and we had to stand--what were we? duty officers?--at night, and he'd come out when it was cold, because that was the best weather, and he'd come out there and we got to be pretty good friends. And he was talking about how the rain on the grapes and the grapes would split. So I said, "Well, why don't you let me know sometime, and I'll see what I can do." So he called, the sun had come out and the grapes were spitting. So I went in with the helicopter and I made, I think, three passes. The last one--these were the big table grapes, they were pretty high vines, you know--and the last pass I ran over probably ten miles an hour, and these vines are just going like this. And before I got through, it had dried them and they were starting to pick on the other side already. We saved that outfit probably a hundred thousand dollars, I don't know. But any time we wanted fruit, any of the generals or somebody would come in, we'd go to the motor pool and get a ton-and-a-half truck and just drive out to the packing shed and load _____. (laughter) It was great.

Besom: So you could fly the helicopter at your own choosing as well?

(both talking at same time, neither discernable)

Strong: Any time. All we had to do is just go out and get in. We could go out and have fun, we could do anything we wanted to do--and they encouraged it.

Besom: That would sound like a dream!

Strong: Yes. We didn't realize it.

Besom: We can't do that now. (laughs)

Miles Burd: They wanted us to get the experience, they welcomed us.

Besom: Okay. Did you have any mishaps?

Strong: I don't think anybody.

Miles Burd: I had one hydraulic failure going on a. . . . I think that was a five [flup?], and I was going over close to Safford, and I lost a hydraulic line, and I landed on a football field there. I called back to the base, and Daryl and a couple mechanics got the parts they needed, and they flew up that evening.

Strong: _____ helicopter.

Miles Burd: _____ and we stayed there that night, and fixed it in the morning. I don't know if you've ever been to Safford, but from the palm trees long the river there, you know. Of course I was waiting for Daryl, and they let the school kids out. You know, they all got to look over the helicopter and everything. They wondered what was wrong with it, and I told them it was stuck in reverse. (laughter) So the next morning we got it fixed up, and I had to do a test hop, because I had. . . .

Strong: You were the test pilot.

Miles Burd: I was the test pilot. And so I took off, got this thing cranked up, back down off the field, over these trees into the river bed, and then flew off into the hills out there to check this helicopter out. There's a procedure you had to do. And got it back in and told them it was okay. (laughter)

Martin: So where were you guys when you heard about this, about the 1956 plane crash?

Miles Burd: Well, I was up in Glendale, mowing my lawn, I think. I lived in Glendale.

Luann Burd: Saturday afternoon.

Miles Burd: Saturday afternoon, yeah.

Miles Burd: We heard about it and went up there just to search. We looked around. . . .

Strong: _____ Utah.

Martin: Were you TOLD to go up there?

Miles Burd: Oh, yeah. Go up there and search the area, try to find it, because they knew they went down.

Luann Burd: Somewhere in the canyon area.

Strong: And we got low on fuel, and we were going back to Grand Canyon City where the search headquarters was, to get refueled so we could go back and do some more searching.

Martin: In one helicopter or two helicopters?

Miles Burd: Well, Daryl and I were together, but both helicopters were up there.

Strong: So on the way back, just for devilishness, you know. . . . I don't know who mentioned it, I think it was Miles, said, "Let's go down and fly over the river. And on the way in, they spotted a shiny piece of metal, so we went over to look at it, and here it was the accident. In a way, we kind of found it by accident. And we picked up a piece of the airplanes. When we got back to Grand Canyon City, all the reporters from *Time* and *Newsweek* and all the magazines were there. I remember when we landed they rushed out and asked us, "Did you see something? What did you find?" And Miles said, "Well, we found the crash, and we have a piece to verify it." And boy, I mean it broke loose. They went crazy.

Miles Burd: This is something for two guys from North Dakota that just hadn't been around a hell of a lot, you know. (chuckles)

Martin: Did you fly past one of these two spots we have these pictures of?, one of which is down just above the Tapeats in the Bright Angel. The other is the top of the Redwall here, maybe on Temple Butte. Were you able to actually touch down at one of these two spots?

Miles Burd: Oh, yes! The one where the fire was, we landed and walked through there.

Martin: That was Tapeats, okay.

Strong: This was taken later, from _____.

Martin: Okay, but that afternoon, when you discovered the crash site, you actually touched down. . . .

Miles Burd: There was articles in the paper.

Luann Burd: There was an article here from *The Washington Post*. A friend of mine from college, she sent it. "Is THIS your husband?!" she said, because he's quoted as saying that he walked through and he saw the dinner napkins spread.

Miles Burd: Yeah, my parents and _____--well, his parents too--they were listening to the radio and they just heard our names and recognized them. And THEY didn't know anything about this. It was just a surprise to our parents. I mean, mine. I suppose yours also.

Strong: _____.

Besom: How was the landing spot?

Miles Burd: You can tell them.

Miles Burd: Well, we couldn't land there. We just put two wheels down and the crew chief got out and got a piece of the wreckage. That's the one thing [that's always?] done, that we learned. You identify what it is first. That was our bringing up in the Air Force, I guess--no matter WHAT it was, you always wanted to make sure you had the right, you know, what it was. And so that's how we got that piece of wreckage and identified positive identification. And then we landed down at the other one, and that wasn't that difficult. Daryl and I--well, and Jim and Phil--Phil hadn't flown that much at that time.

Besom: What were their last names?

Miles Burd: Jim Womack and Phil Prince [phonetic spellings]--they're dead. They were in their helicopter. But Daryl and I had been most everyplace in a helicopter, I guess, you could go. There isn't a peak probably around here within sight that we didn't fly over and throw out a smoke flare and land on it. If we couldn't put four wheels on the ground, we put three or two. But I mean, anything you see, and we've done that. We thought we were the best damned helicopter pilots in the world, and I think we probably were. But some people said with difficult landing spots, if you could put it on, if you got four wheels on the ground it wasn't difficult, was it Daryl?

Strong: _____. Just the way it was.

Besom: And what kind of helicopter was it?

Miles Burd: Starskey H-19.

Besom: And so what did the scene look like then?

Miles Burd: A mess.

Strong: Fire, wreckage, and bodies.

Miles Burd: The thing that struck me is walking around, all the jewelry, billfolds, and stuff that would come out of the luggage, you know, that fluttered down. Of course it wasn't on fire. I mean, it's just like--like _____ laundry--perfectly clean right next to the _____. You know, there was money laying around, and jewelry and billfolds. Just everything just came out of these suitcases. I suppose when you think back what happened, it hit and it burned right away, and some of this other stuff was

just coming down. You know, there's the flash from the fuel, and then some of it didn't burn that long.

Besom: So was the site actually recognizable as a plane at that time?

Miles Burd: Well, yeah, there was no doubt what it was. And of course, I don't know, we'd been to many accidents, because that's what we done every day. If there was an accident, we went to it.

Martin: Were there just these two fuselage impact _____?

(both talking at same time, neither discernable)

Miles Burd: Yeah, the one was up on the edge. That's where the mountain climbers went in. And the other was down.

Besom: So you were the first on scene at this accident?

Miles Burd: Yeah, you'll read in there that the other helicopter was first, but Daryl and I pretty well agree that we were first in. We KNOW we were the first ones to land and put two wheels on the ground and get a piece of the wreckage of the DC-7. But like the articles you read. . . .

Strong: They got it mixed up.

Miles Burd: Got it mixed up.

Strong: (inaudible)

Miles Burd: They put words in your mouth (chuckles) how it could be when you got. . . .

Strong: Miles is the one that _____, saw the flash of metal that was shiny and said, "Let's go over there and take a look at that."

Besom: And then you landed at that point, after seeing the flash of metal?

Miles Burd: Then we knew what it was, yeah.

Besom: So then were you involved in hauling out any of the stuff, or just identification?

Miles Burd: No. Like I say, we had the two helicopters from Luke, and we were responsible for--they wouldn't do gunnery training if we didn't have the two helicopters there. So we came back, so we were there on Monday morning for gunnery training, which started like 4:30 in the morning, or something--I remember it was early, anyways. WE didn't go to work that early, but we were available. I guess we were on call all the time, twenty-four hours a day, as far as that goes. And we were all through by, oh, 3:00, 3:30 in the afternoon, _____ when gunnery training was all over. But, you know, that part of Luke, the mission of Luke, is the same NOW as it was then--going

down to Gila Bend and down on the Goldwater Range. I just drove through all that on Sunday--down to Ajo and Gila Bend and back up.

Besom: Was this sort of the beginning of using helicopters in searches and rescues?

Miles Burd: No, there had been two helicopters here, and those helicopters and the two pilots, the day I came in, they sent both of them to Korea, THAT day, and I came in that night. There had been two "H" pilots _____. And I don't know anything about the history of the "H" pilots, what they done around here.

Strong: _____.

Miles Burd: Fives.

Strong: H-4 was the one they used in Korea. H-4 was the first one that was of any use at all.

Miles Burd: But there wasn't any. . . . I don't KNOW what happened before we were here.

Martin: _____ was called down here from. . . .

Miles Burd: Yeah. See, I flew the same helicopter up at Las Vegas for six months before I came here.

Strong: And I was up here for a couple of weeks _____. The pilot they had was gone.

Besom: So did you have to go through debriefing on the rim after _____ the accident?

Miles Burd: No, not as such, no. No.

Strong: They didn't pay much attention to us once _____. They knew that they'd both gone down, and where they were.

Miles Burd: They knew there were no survivors. And they knew we were leaving. There's no use to stop one mission to do something that's futile anyway. And that's when they called in the army from Fort Huachuca and they came up with their [Pisakis?] H-21s. One of the articles I noticed in there says that Captain Womack was driving an H-21, but I know he wasn't. (laughter)

Besom: Did you have other experiences flying at Grand Canyon after that?

Miles Burd: Yeah, we went in several times on--I know Daryl did too--on picking up sick Indians and bringing them out.

Besom: Oh! How would they get the message out? Did they have. . . .

Miles Burd: They had telephones.

Strong: Oh, once we went down there the first time, they liked that. That was better than going out on a donkey, I'll tell you. It kind of got to be a little bit _____.

Miles Burd: Holler wolf, you know.

Besom: Yeah. So they would call out and you'd respond from Luke Air Force Base?

Miles Burd: As it says here in this newsletter from 1956, it says, "The telephone can be used for calling out, but you can't ring in yet." (laughter)

Strong: Probably the cutest thing that I ever went through, we used to spend a lot of time down in Gila Bend, in SOME searches. I was coming back one time--and this story's kind of hard to believe--but there's an old prospector _____. And here's an old prospector with a mule, and the mule is just like you see on TV, it's got the provisions and so forth and the shovel, hiking out across the desert. For no reason at all other than having some time on my hands, I landed out there and shut it down and went over and talked to him, asked him what he was doing and where he was going and what he expected to find, just having a nice conversation with him, and one of them would not even THINK of telling me what he had in mind of where he was going or what he was doing--just very uncooperative in the discussion because he was suspicious. So that was one of them. And another time, the same thing happened, and I set down and went over and talked to this old fellah, I said, "Where you hiking to?" And he pointed to a peak up there. He said, "You know, for a long time I've been looking at that." There's something up there that they see that they can be interested in, but I didn't see it. He was going up there because, he said, "I'm quite sure that I can find some gold up there." He was an old guy, and it was a ways to go. So I said, "Well, do you know how long it's going to take you to get up there?" "Oh, a number of hours, you know." "Would you like me to take you up there?" He looked at me with amazement, "Is that feasible? Is that possible?" "Sure. The only thing is, what are you going to do with your donkey?" "Oh, I'll just tie him up here to one of these trees and he'll survive for a couple of days if he has to." But I took him up there and let him off. I might have saved him _____ how much misery I saved this guy. And nicest guy to talk to you can imagine. That's all there was to it. Just the difference of the two people. One wouldn't say a word, and the other one, "Oh, I couldn't think of anything better to happen to me."

Martin: _____.

Besom: I was going to say, did you find out if there was anything there?

Strong: I don't think _____.

Martin: Did he get back to his mule?

Luann Burd: _____ worries about that mule.

Strong: _____ I don't know. He couldn't care less, he just wanted to get up to that. He'd have had a hard time getting up there.

Besom: That's actually an incredible story.

Miles Burd: I put on an air show when they dedicated the new Sky Harbor in 1956. The Sky Harbor at THAT time wasn't much.

Besom: Fifty-six [1956] was a busy year!

Miles Burd: Well, I guess that was the only FULL year I was here.

Besom: Okay. When did you start flying then?

Miles Burd: Fifty-three [1953]. Let's see, was it fourteen months through cadets and then a couple of months through helicopter school? Yeah. See, I went through jet school first, over at Williams. I got through there, we pretty much had the killer instincts _____ Korean War. They decided they had enough fighter pilots in Korea, so they were going to put us in the KB-29s or KB-50s which are the refueling. To me, that was _____ like being a truck driver, you know. So I volunteered for helicopters. That was our main job after that, but we flew [other things?]. Daryl done a lot of L-20 flying, tried to check me out in them. Flew the T-6 and C-47, B-25.

Strong: I went to _____ school, _____ couple of B-25s.

Miles Burd: We had two B-25s, one or two B-26s, at least one C-47, and on the weekend a few T-33s [or F-84s?]. These were available to anybody to use on the weekend if they liked. (Besom chuckles) Really, this is okay.

Strong: I came from North Dakota, had a sister living in Fargo. Well, a few times, you just get a crew chief, it's Friday night, you know, and flew a B-25 up to Fargo to visit my family and come back on Sunday or Monday. It was great!

Miles Burd: How many times did I come up to see you before we were married?

Besom: Where was that?

Miles Burd: Well, she was in Fargo going to school, and this friend of mine was from Ohio, and we'd take a T-33, which was a two-place jet, and go to Fargo. He'd drop me off and he'd go to Ohio. This was on Friday afternoon. And he'd call me up Sunday forenoon and wonder how the weather was. If I was ready to come home, he'd come and pick me up. A couple of times I said, "Nah, the weather's bad, you can't make it." (laughter) One time I think I stayed ten days, didn't I? (laughter)

Besom: In bad weather?

Miles Burd: Right. And finally, the major, our boss--see, we were both assistant operations officer, and the base operations officer was, we got along great with him. We taught him to fly a helicopter. I talked to him, _____ talk to him once in a while. He said this one time, "Burd, if you don't come home, I gotta put you on leave." "Send the plane up." (laughter) A C-47, you know, that's the old gooney bird, going to San Francisco for parts. So they sent that up _____ picked me up and brought me home. (laughter)

Besom: Wow.

Miles Burd: But, now, all this isn't for publishing. I don't know if they could still put us in jail or not.

Besom: We'll keep it closed till the statute of limitations runs out.

Strong: I never took one day's leave in the service.

Luann Burd: The one thing that you never did, you talked about moving the donkeys in the Grand Canyon, but you never did that.

Besom: Oh?

Miles Burd: No, we were going to round up wild burros. We quit that, that got stopped. And that was a good thing, because. . . .

Luann Burd: I thought you were going to move them from one place to another.

Miles Burd: No. But we were going to mine guano up in the Grand Canyon. You know what guano is?

Besom: Uh-huh.

Miles Burd: We talked about doing THAT.

Strong: _____ west end. An Arizona company _____ Corporation, I guess, was down there.

Miles Burd: We talked about THAT.

Strong: What pictures do YOU do? Some of these miners. . . .

Besom: I don't know, I think all _____.

(several talking at same time, none discernable)

Besom: What were you going to do with the bat guano?

Miles Burd: Sell it. I don't remember how we were going to do it. I don't remember if you could land up there, or if they were going to use the helicopter to string a cable--I don't remember. They had all kinds of things going.

Besom: But you were still working for the Air Force?

Miles Burd: Yup.

Besom: These are just side. . . .

Miles Burd: Yeah.

Strong: Do you know why one of these _____ pretty good _____. Well, there was just the two of us most of the time, and we were young, and we kind of stood out in that aspect of it. Plus there was other things we could do. But the Air Force was going through a period of time where they had an excess amount of money. If you didn't get rid of all the money, it was difficult to get another quota the next year. So they encouraged us to get all the experience we could.

Miles Burd: JP-4 was probably a nickel a gallon at that time--you know, jet fuel.

Strong: Miles would just come over at night sometimes, and we'd decide to go out flying at night. We used to have a lot of fun. This isn't for publication, but I remember this one time out--and that's when the UFOs was big news, see--we get out in the desert, and it was different forty years ago, than it is now, because there was trails all over that led nowhere. We picked out somebody going down one of these trails, within reasonable range. They'd be going down the road to beat the band, and we had a REAL powerful light on this thing that you could rotate all the way around and up and down--REAL powerful spotlight. Come up in behind them, and they're going down the road, you know. We knew just by _____ this thing before, about what angle it would go. We'd come down behind them and put the light on, and of course, you know, this FANTASTIC flood light in the darkness, it just HAD to be something supernatural. Man, they'd come to a screeching halt. We used to _____.

Besom: _____.

Strong: Oh, God, well as soon as they stopped and heard the noise. . . .

Miles Burd: We used to do [some bombing?] with the helicopters too. When they're flying the 84s, they carried their practice arms in a pod, and this thing I think had--didn't it have eight little practice bombs in it?

Strong: Yeah, eight-pounders.

Miles Burd: They were shaped like the early atomic bombs, you know, and that's what they used down on the gunnery range. And they'd come in and deliver these, and they had a shotgun shell-like charge in them. There was a firing pin, when they'd hit, that'd fire the smoke charge. That's how they scored them. So they get a call that somebody lost a pod out in a cotton field or something, so we'd go out in the helicopter and pick those up. Well, we'd end up with a bunch of these bombs. Take off in the helicopter,

used to be a lot of auxiliary fields around here. So we'd go out and mark a spot or something, and then we'd go up in the helicopter, lean out the window and drop these things. (laughter) We used to go out and land in a watermelon field or cantaloupe field, or just get down close enough, the crew chief would jump out and throw some in. But we caught so much hell we finally quit. (laughter) The crew chief would say, "The helicopter's getting dusty. Why don't you take it out and wash it?" So we'd go out to one of the lakes and just put it down, just about put the wheels in the water and. . . . (laughter)

Besom: The spray?

Miles Burd: The turbulence would pretty well wash it for us. (laughter)

Besom: Did you ever have any real scary moments? I think you were talking about one earlier, weren't you, where you thought he was a goner?

Strong: _____ it wasn't all that _____. Just to give you an idea of what it was like then, compared to now--you probably _____--the secretary of the Air Force or somebody right at the top decided that everybody on a jet base had to be jet qualified. Well, I went to multi-engine school. Miles wasn't [attracted to it?], he went to Williams. So Major Ward, our boss, one day said, "Daryl, you gotta get checked out in a T-33." I said, "What for?" You know, I wasn't interested in _____. He told me that everybody's got to get checked out in that, got to be jet qualified. So I went out and got a T-33, and you know what a T-33 is, that's a jet. It was a facsimile of the first jet fighter that flew in Korea, good airplane. We had [made the function?] in trainers _____. So my checkout in a T-33 from the first time I sat in the seat and really got--I might have LOOKED inside of one sometime--but sat down in it, and Major Ward, we went over to Goodyear, which how many miles is it from Luke to Goodyear? Ten?

Miles Burd: Five. Four or five.

Strong: We made a touch-and-go, and another touch-and-go, and we came back to Luke. And I get out of the airplane, we're walking back to the office, Major Ward looks at me and he says, "Daryl, you're not coming back, you gotta go flyin'." That was the checkout, it took forty minutes, and I was a jet pilot. From nothing to a jet pilot in forty minutes. That's the only checkout I had. And the only thing I knew about the airplane was it carried 703 gallons of fuel, it had a counter, and I knew how to get the tanks to go from one to the other. That's the ONLY think I knew. The next flight I made, I went up to Nellis at night to transport somebody up there. That was the second flight. So you can see how the training has. . . .

Miles Burd: They had a lot of--at that time _____. Quite a few pilots that had been in World War II, and then got out, and then recalled for the Korean War. And then they wanted to stay in and get their retirement. They were doing ANYTHING to stay in. They were going to night school and doing anything, because unless you were regular Air Force, you could be a major or a red colonel one day and a sergeant the next day, if you wanted to

stay in. But Daryl and I, I think from the start, both were determined, KNEW we weren't going to stay in. We weren't kissing up to anybody. (laughter)

Besom: So how long did you do this for?

Miles Burd: I was out at Luke for 2½ years probably.

Strong: I was up there for a couple of years.

Besom: Of course this isn't for publication, so. . . .

Miles Burd: We've been good friends ever since. It wasn't many years since we both left in 1956.

Strong: I left in 1957.

Miles Burd: I left in August of 1956.

Besom: And that's when you stopped flying together?

Miles Burd: Daryl still flies. I haven't flown as a pilot since.

Besom: Since 1957?

Miles Burd: Right.

Strong: Sometime this year--I don't remember exact--sometime this summer it'll have been fifty-three years since I started flying. I started flying in high school, and that's what got me into Air Force ROTC.

Besom: Are you still the best pilot? (laughter)

Miles Burd: See, what got me into pilot training, I enlisted in the Air Force the day that I got my draft notice to go in the Army. Seven of us went in the Air Force together, just my brother and five neighbor kids. We went through Lackland, and I guess there were sixty-four in a flight, or something like that. And at the end, everybody got one stripe--everybody except me and my brother. They said I was indifferent to correction. (laughter) So then I went to Mississippi to Keesler Air Force Base in Biloxi, Mississippi. While I was there, one day I saw a guy, a friend of mine from Minnesota, and we saw a thing that said they needed pilots at that time.

[END SIDE 1, BEGIN SIDE 2]

Miles Burd: Anyway, we saw this thing that they needed pilots, and you could take the test, if you had four years of college, or take the equivalency test. And the rumor was that if you washed out of pilot training, you automatically got four stripes. So I thought, "It's the only damned way I'll ever get a stripe, is to wash out of pilot training." I knew I couldn't go through, I never went to college a day in my life. So I went and took the test, and lo and behold, I passed it! And I ended up going through. After I

left there, I was a control tower operator in Idaho for a while, and then pilot training after that.

Strong: Miles, you mentioned being good helicopter pilots.

Miles Burd: I don't know, but I would guess that he was probably the best that there was.

Strong: And I'd like to take myself that I might have been second best, or maybe Womack was, I don't know, but we were all good, no question about it, because we did things without a second thought that the Army would have _____.

Miles Burd: Well, we went through _____ school at Gary Air Force down in Marfa, Texas, is where we went to school. Then later on, people who HAD been instructors--in fact, Jim had been an instructor at Gary, but they'd send his guys out to check us out to see if we knew what we were doing out here. So we taught those dudes things every time they came out, because we had experience in mountains and things that they just were amazed at what could be done.

Besom: Have either of you flown commercially over the canyon since?

Miles Burd: No. I thought about it when I was up there this fall, passed by in October, but we didn't, for some reason. I guess I'd be disappointed, because I used to fly in it, and now you've got to fly out there so damned far, you're looking over at it--I don't know if I'd even appreciate it.

Besom: Well, thank you for talking to us.

Miles Burd: Okay. You have access to these. Use what you can.

Strong: Yeah, as far as I'm concerned. . . .

[END OF INTERVIEW]